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ABSTRACT

Georgia State University has just completed a coordinated accrediting visit believed to be unique among postsecondary institutions. The massive informational needs of this large number of agencies visiting a single campus at one time afforded institutional research a significant breakthrough. The coordinated accrediting visit is aimed at saving time and money for the institution and providing an interlocked evaluation process. In addition to the regional accreditation agency, ten other agencies sent their committees to the campus during one week. The evaluators from these agencies totaled 72, making them the largest visiting committee in the history of accreditation. The information gathered for the self-study report was not limited to the self-study process, but was developed for multiple purposes. This model of institutional research has been tried and tested and judged practical in the institutional environment. (Author/MSE)

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HOW IR MAINTAINED ITS COOL IN THE SELF-STUDY PANDEMONIUM: IT WAS A NEAT SYSTEM

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Georgia State University has just completed a coordinated accrediting visitation believed to be unique at postsecondary institutions. The massive informational needs of this large number of agencies visiting a single campus at one time afforded institutional research a significant breakthrough. This paper demonstrates how an institutional research staff in preparation for such a visitation can a) establish a more visible delineation of the goals and objectives of the university program of institutional research, b) can plan and implement this program in anticipation of the multiple needs of administrators, faculty, and students as well as answering the informational requests of the visiting agencies, and c) can widely disseminate an accurate, common core of information that is the result of its research program.

Some highlights of this paper include:

- The coordinated accrediting visit is aimed at saving time and money for the institution and providing an interlocked evaluation process.

- In addition to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, ten other agencies sent their committees to our campus the first week of May, 1977.

- The evaluators from these agencies totaled 72 -- representing the largest visiting committee to a single campus at one time in the history of accreditation.

- A survey of visiting participants to assess the coordinated experiment provided this finding:

  A general recognition that, based upon the GSU experiment, institutions can coordinate logis-

tically this kind of activity and can pull together a common core of information which is useful to all accrediting agencies.

- The institutional self-study report of Georgia State University attests that this common core of information was developed by institutional research to serve multiple purposes, and was not limited to the self-study process.

It is concluded in this paper that the self-study vehicle afforded institutional research a significant breakthrough. The identity, purpose, and products of institutional research have been more clearly recognized by the constituencies: administrators, faculty, and students. The model of institutional research at Georgia State University has now been tried and tested and judged "practical" in the institutional environment.

HOW IR MAINTAINED ITS COOL IN THE SELF-STUDY PANDEMONIUM:
IT WAS A NEAT SYSTEM

Georgia State University (GSU) has just completed a coordinated accrediting visitation believed to be unique at postsecondary institutions. The aim of this paper is to provide a brief overview of the scope of this accrediting experiment and to describe how the institutional research staff as a part of the self study involvement (a) organized and established a clearer delineation of the raison d'etre, goals and objectives of the University program of institutional research, (b) planned and implemented this program in anticipation of needs and (c) disseminated program results.

Overview of the Coordinated Accreditation Visit

Institutional self-study programs, required for accreditation, are about as popular as death and taxes. Everyone tries to avoid them, but they catch up with institutions sooner or later. The accrediting process has come under attack recently (Watkins, 1977; Semas, 1977). Perhaps in response to these criticisms, a stronger effort has been put forth by some of the regional accrediting agencies with much encouragement from the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) to persuade institutions, especially universities, to attempt a coordinated visit by several accrediting agencies. This approach is aimed at saving time and money for the institution and providing an interlocked evaluation process.

In 1975 GSU initiated its decennial self study preparatory to a visit by a committee from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Early in the process the institution entered into discussions with the Executive Secretary of the Commission to examine the possibility of bringing together as many of the

programmatic or specialized agencies as possible for a coordinated visit with the SACS group in the spring of 1977.

A poll of agencies which accredited programs at GSU revealed much interest in this venture as well as a willingness to participate and rearrange their own calendars of visitations in order to join in the spring visitation already set for SACS. These agencies sent their committees the first week of May, 1977:

American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA)
American Dietetic Association (ADA)
American Medical Association (AMA)
American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)
American Psychological Association (APA)
Georgia State Department of Education (GSDE)
National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS)
National Association of Schools of Art (NASA)
National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)
National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)

The evaluators from these agencies totaled 72--representing the largest visiting committee to a single campus at one time in the history of accreditation. A survey was conducted of visiting participants to assess the experiment (Ezell et al., 1977). One of the principal findings was a general recognition that, based upon the GSU experience, institutions can coordinate logistically this kind of activity and can pull together a common core of information which is useful to all accrediting agencies. The Institutional Self-Study Report of GSU dated March, 1977 attests that this common core of information was developed by institutional research to serve multiple purposes, and was not limited to the self-study process.

Organizational Structure of Institutional Research

In July of 1971, the Office of Institutional Planning was established at GSU. The scope of this office was primarily that of a small university-wide task force center coordinating administrative and reporting details for the

Executive Vice President and Provost. But a new function for the University was inaugurated: institutional research. When an office or entity is small, very little structure is necessary. Activities and personnel grew rapidly, however, and it was deemed appropriate to cluster personnel to take into account functional differences.

The Commission on Colleges revised its Standards in January, 1974, by adding a section under Standard II (Organization and Administration) which reads:

> Institutional research and planning are necessary functions of sound administration. Organization of these responsibilities will depend upon the size and complexity of the institution. However, all institutions should engage in continuing study, analysis, and appraisal of their purposes, processes, and programs. The results of these studies should be evident in the consideration given to the major decisions and projections which shape the future course of the institution's operation. Both academic and administrative functions should show evidence of continuing and systematic critical analysis. Responsibility for direction and coordination of these studies should be explicitly assigned to one or more staff offices which should be provided the necessary resources and access to information sources in order to discharge these duties effectively (p. 7).

The Manual for the Institutional Self-Study Program of the Commission on Colleges (p. 14) addresses itself to this activity and asks that the unit be described and evaluated in terms of organization, functions and scope. The manual further raises these questions:

> Do students, faculty, administrators, the governing board, and other college personnel fully accept and support the unit? How does the program contribute to the total educational program? What evidence is there of systematic and critical analysis of the purpose as well as the planning, implementation, and evaluation procedures of the program?

The impetus of these statements on institutional research and planning as well as the impending self study were major factors influencing the decision to establish a separate organizational identity for institutional

research within the Office of Institutional Planning at GSU. It was obvious, in our opinion, that in 1974-75 GSU was not in full compliance with the new statement on institutional research in Standard II. Once the organizational identity was broken out, it was possible to develop a strategy for institutional research staff to insure compliance with the Standard and to begin building a quality program. Tables 1 and 2 present the delineation of the two basic functions in the Office of Institutional Planning at that time and a strategy developed and implemented by institutional research (Smith, 1975).

TABLE 1

A COMPARISON OF PRIMARY FUNCTIONS IN
THE OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING, 1974-75

	Administrative and Coordinating Function	Institutional Research Function
TYPE:	Operational activity involving high-level coordination and administrative services for the total University.	Professional activity involving communicative and conceptual skills as well as research methods in a practitioner's approach to study analysis of the University and higher education.
NATURE:	Largely a reoccurring process performed on an annual, quarterly, monthly or continuing basis as required.	A non-repetitive process focusing on major questions of institutional direction, long-range strategies, and intrainstitutional comparisons.
EXAMPLES:	Annual Reports Coordination Consolidation Compilations Preparation of Report	Analytical studies to provide the total institutional perspective of the "past, present and future," dealing with students, faculty, staff, finances, programs and purposes.
	Catalogs & Quarterly Schedules Coordination & Checking Submission to Printer Proofing	Resource personnel to decision-makers involving verbal and written contact to: Define problems and propose alternate courses Interface with data for planning purposes Review and digest literature on higher education Develop interinstitutional relationships for exchange of ideas and data Employ models for projections and predictions for planning
	Class Scheduling Coordination of classroom assignments Processing changes in scheduling Posting of schedule on Master Board	
	Reports Coordination HEGIS President's Quarterly Teaching Report System Activity Reports Faculty Curriculum Personnel Facilities	Fact Book Design, Format, Content and Dissemination University Community University System National
	Faculty Data Maintenance of manual individual faculty record card	

TABLE 2

A STRATEGY FOR IR DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED IN 1974-75

SUBJECT CONTENT:	To broaden our subjects and concentrate less upon faculty studies and more upon students, budget and finance, organizational and functional structures, programs, etc., which are also important considerations in this economic era.
ORDERING:	To attempt to order by priorities anticipating needs rather than to approach it generally as "task force in nature." This is not to imply that special projects are not vital to the University, but they should not be the "tail wagging the dog."
CONSTITUENCIES:	To develop relationships with students, faculty and other campus personnel and offices. To date, we have served and been in contact with the vice presidential group and to a limited extent with academic deans. An ad hoc faculty committee would be a valuable consulting group for some of the institutional research. Student involvement might take another form, e.g., a laboratory experience or project for students to learn more about the workings of higher education, assistance to the Student Government Association in some of their undertakings, etc.
IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION:	To afford the users or potential users with a briefing on research reports rather than relying on them to digest formalized studies. The Abstracts of Institutional Research and Feedback Sheet were an initial step to encourage input and evaluation by administrators. The last edition of the Fact Book incorporated information from studies and referenced them, thus providing awareness to a wider audience of this function and recognition to the researchers as well as an opportunity for evaluation.
RESOURCES:	To train support personnel to do more of the data handling and routine analyses to provide more time for the research personnel to concentrate on other professional duties.
INFORMATION SOURCES:	To focus on the need for student data which is a vital ingredient for institutional research and planning for students.

Subject Matter Studied

The plan of institutional research studies commencing in 1974-75, a full year before the University mobilized for the Self Study, was in anticipation of needs. The Manual for the Institutional Self-Study Program of SACS provided an excellent preview of what was needed. This is not to say that this was the only purpose of the studies; rather, upper administration was apprised that particular studies would also serve informational needs of the Institutional Self-Study Program for accreditation. This approach accomplished advance notice to the administration of what materials were anticipated to be placed in the hands of the University-Wide Self-Study Committees. Thus, the administration was provided ample time to react to the institutional research efforts before the faculty committees received them. Such an approach had a psychological advantage of giving the administration a chance to become comfortable or familiar with the findings so that conflicts would not be encountered by institutional research when wider dissemination was accomplished.

Dissemination of Program Results

Shortly after the President announced in July of 1975 to the faculty and staff that GSU had been scheduled for the Institutional Self-Study Program, the Steering Committee and 11 University-Wide Committees were formed. In addition, each College of the University conducted a separate self study with a steering committee and college-wide committees. It is noteworthy that 400 faculty, administrators and students served on these committees at GSU, and that these committees were chaired largely by teaching faculty.

In the early stage, the Coordinator of Institutional Research was asked by the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Planning to meet with the Steering Committee. Examples of what was available, or could be made available,

were presented and discussed. These included the GSU Fact Book, Abstracts of Institutional Research, a few selected studies, and a list of studies in progress, with scheduled completion dates, as well as several proposed studies which could be undertaken. An immediate reaction was received from the Psychology professor chairing the committee. He observed that institutional research had already done much of the work needed and asked if it could be made available to all University-Wide Committees. Shortly thereafter, the Executive Vice President and Provost stated his position to a joint meeting of the Steering Committee and University-wide Chairman group: all institutional information needed for the Self Study was available. He further designated at this meeting that the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Planning and Coordinator of Institutional Research would be his liaison with the committees to provide this information. At the same time he gave instructions that if these needs were not met, he wanted this brought to his personal attention and he would insure that needs for information were fulfilled. Needless to say, no chairman was denied information in the eighteen-month process. Institutional research interpreted the charge of the Executive Vice President and Provost to mean that it had proven its performance and confidence in the research program had been established. Wide dissemination of the results of the efforts was thereby permitted.

Perhaps the most effective product of institutional research for the Self Study was the GSU Fact Book. This publication was not a new venture; it was backed very solidly by the program of institutional research. The 1975-76 edition of the GSU Fact Book was distributed by the appropriate chairmen to each of the 400 committee members. This edition carried a transmittal from the Executive Vice President and Provost which addressed the self study and advised the recipient that institutional fact books contained special material of the type which has been very helpful in the conduct of institutional self studies. This

particular issue focused on the ten-year period from 1966 through 1975 and indicated that if more detailed information was needed, the source on each page listed the office or reference used. The reader was also informed that reports used in the Fact Book were available in the University Library.

The Abstracts of Institutional Research for the previous fiscal year and past fiscal years were helpful to many of the committees. They were distributed to the chairman group and provided a reference point whereby committee members, through their chairmen, could receive various studies. The report numbering system aided the requisition process. Since only one copy was provided per committee, sufficient file copies were generally immediately available without xeroxing costs or personnel time. (Appendix A provides an annotated bibliography of IR reports specifically referenced in the Self-Study Report.)

During the eighteen-month self-study process, the Coordinator of Institutional Research was contacted by about a hundred individuals involved in this work. In addition to providing specific institutional reports for the past several years, the Coordinator provided data from other University and higher education sources, assisted with data definitions, and conducted an external survey. By using the personal/professional contacts established with the Urban Universities Council of Thirteen and the Southern University Group of 25, quick and useful information was obtained from the survey. The fact that the institutional research staff had established contacts with peer institutions in the nation and these contacts responded to the informational needs made a positive impression on this faculty committee.

The series of grade studies conducted at GSU represented the major thrust of specific institutional research during the self-study process. The findings of the grade studies were incorporated into several chapters of the Self-Study Report addressing academic program evaluations. It is highly improbable that

research of this scope could have been done at GSU without the self-study involvement. The University support given to the grade study project provided an unparalleled opportunity for the institutional research staff--this opportunity was met with diligent hard work. Not only has the grade research been used in the Self-Study Report, an abstract of each study was distributed to the general faculty and has been the subject of five articles appearing in the Signal, the student newspaper. The public was apprised of the research via the Office of Public Information, and it was given news spot coverage by the local radio and television stations. Both The Atlanta Journal and Associated Press carried articles about the work. Nationally, a number of educational organizations and associations have referenced it in their bulletins and newsletters. An article on the first grade study was also published in Research in Higher Education (Prather & Smith, 1977).

Conclusions

The self-study process at GSU afforded institutional research a significant breakthrough. The identity and purpose of the institutional research function were more clearly established through the self-study vehicle with the constituencies: administrators, faculty and students. These constituencies are served in different ways by institutional research, but each group is believed to be important to our success or failure. Maintaining these multiple relationships within a positive framework is our ongoing commitment. The model of institutional research at GSU has now been tried and tested and judged "practical" in the environment.

In July of 1977, as a result of actions based upon recommendations of the Self-Study Report, the Office of Institutional Planning was expanded in terms of personnel and functions. Facilities planning and space allocation and utilization have been merged into Institutional Planning. The Assistant Vice

President for Institutional Planning is in the process of building an integrated planning model--this, too, is based upon the self study. It can be concluded that the Office of Institutional Planning has had its impact on the GSU self study and now the self study is having its impact on the Office of Institutional Planning.

References

Ezell, J. B., Smith, G., & Bryson, C. H. An Assessment of the Coordinated Accrediting Visit to Georgia State University by Visiting Committee Members, Georgia State University, Report No. 78-2, Office of Institutional Planning, August, 1977.

Prather, J. E. & Smith, G." A Study of the Relationships Between Faculty Characteristics, Subject Field, and Course Grading Patterns." Research in Higher Education 5, No. 4, December 1976: 351-363.

Semas, Philip W. "New Criticism for Business-School Association." The Chronicle of Higher Education, 18 April 1977, p. 7.

Smith, G. Institutional Planning Functions: Some Thoughts and Reflections, Georgia State University, Report No. 75-18, Office of Institutional Planning, January, 1975.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Manual for the Institutional Self-Study Program of the Commission on Colleges. Atlanta, 1974.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Standards of the College Delegate Assembly. Atlanta, 1976.

Watkins, B. T. "Western Accrediting Panel Accused of Discrimination." The Chronicle of Higher Education, 25 July 1977, p. 9.

APPENDIX A

Annotated Bibliography of Institutional Studies
Prepared by the Office of Institutional Planning
and Used or Cited in the Self-Study

Note: This Appendix was incorporated into the
Institutional Self-Study Report

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Faculty:

Bryson, C.H., and Cannon, R.E., Teaching Workload Study, Georgia State University, Report No. 76-16, Office of Institutional Planning, June, 1976.

Computed and analyzed classroom teaching workload of the faculty for AY 1976 and Summer Quarter, 1976, on an equivalency basis by school, rank/title, level, number of faculty, mean student load, and mean student credit hours.

Bryson, C.H., and Cannon, R.E., Distribution of Salaries 1975-76 Full-Time Regular Teaching Faculty, Georgia State University, Report No. 76-10, Office of Institutional Planning, February, 1976.

Detailed salaries on a nine-month basis by academic school, department, rank, and sex. Showed mean salaries, as well as frequency distributions.

Prather, J.E., Determinants for Salary Increase: A Look at the Underlying Factors, Georgia State University, Report No. 75-6, Office of Institutional Planning, August, 1974.

Focused on the determinants for salary increases and presented an analytical approach to factors influencing raises.

Prather, J.E., and Smith, G., A Comparison of Georgia State University with a National Faculty Survey, Report No. 75-7, Office of Institutional Planning, March, 1975.

Presented results of a survey of the faculty at GSU and compared these results with a national survey. Contained findings re personal attitudes, demographic information, and opinions about higher education.

Prather, J.E., and Smith, G., The Impact of Discipline, Minority Status and Sex Upon Salary 1973-74 Regular Teaching Faculty, Georgia State University, Report No. 75-9, Office of Institutional Planning, September, 1974.

Analyzed discipline, minority status, and sex in relationship to faculty salaries taking into account highest degree, rank, years at institution, years in rank, and department head status.

Smith, G. and Prather, J.E., Report on Salaries of the 1974-75 Regular Reoccurring Teaching Faculty, Georgia State University, Report No. 75-4, Office of Institutional Planning, August, 1974.

Analyzed salary increases by total, school, rank, and sex; compared promoted faculty with non-promoted faculty on the same basis.

Strickland, W.G., A Comparative Workload Study of Full-Time Teaching Faculty for the Academic Years, 1970-71 and 1974-75, Georgia State University, Report No. 76-2, Office of Institutional Planning, August, 1975.

Investigated teaching workload of full-time teaching faculty re credit hours taught, weighted hours generated, and cost of faculty salary per credit hour and weighted hour on a departmental and school basis.

Williams, J.E. and Smith, G., Regional Comparison of Faculty Salaries, Georgia State University, Report No. 76-13, Office of Institutional Planning, April, 1976.

Compared the salary of the GSU faculty by rank, range, mean, and discipline with data for eighteen public doctoral institutions in the South.

Smith, G. and Bryson, C.H., Age and Seniority of the 1975-76 Full-Time Teaching Faculty, Georgia State University, Report No. 76-9, Office of Institutional Planning, January, 1976.

Presented distributions and averages re age, years in present rank, previous rank, and length of service by school.

Grades:

Prather, J.E. and Smith, G., Faculty Grading Patterns, Georgia State University, Report No. 76-12, Office of Institutional Planning, April, 1976.

Analyzed grading patterns of over 1,000 individuals teaching more than 2,000 courses Fall Quarter, 1975. Ascertained the relationship between course discipline fields and grading patterns, controlling for teachers' academic and personal attributes.

Prather, J.E., and Smith, G., An Analysis of Undergraduate Grades by Course in Relation to Student Ability Levels, Programs of Study, and Longitudinal Trends, Georgia State University, Report No. 76-15, Office of Institutional Planning, May, 1976.

Analyzed final letter grades in 144 undergraduate courses over a five-year period, and systematically controlled for such antecedents as standardized test scores, grade point averages, demographic background, programs of study, and longitudinal trends. Data analyzed included records of 9,338 current undergraduates and 125,000 grades.

Prather, J.E., and Wadley, J.K., A Multivariate Analysis of Student Grades in 138 Graduate Courses, Georgia State University, Report No. 77-9, Office of Institutional Planning, January, 1977.

Analyzed final letter grades in 138 graduate courses over a five-year period, and systematically controlled for such antecedents as standardized test scores, grade point averages, demographic background, programs of study, and longitudinal trends. Data analyzed included records of 7,002 current graduate students and 45,000 grades.

Prather, J.E., Williams, J.E., and Wadley, J.K., The Relationship of Major Field of Study with Undergraduate Course Grades: A Multivariate Analysis Controlling for Academic and Personal Characteristics and Longitudinal Trends, Georgia State University, Report No. 77-3, Office of Institutional Planning, August, 1976.

Investigated differences in grading patterns by major fields of study, controlling for academic and personal background characteristics of students, and longitudinal trends.

Institutional:

Prather, J.E. and Smith, G., Enrollment Forecasting at Georgia State University: One Perspective, Report No. 76-5, Office of Institutional Planning, October, 1975.

Provided an overview of the principal methods being used in higher education to predict student enrollments and explained each in relation to GSU. Included background enrollment data and projections to 1980.

Prather, J.E. and Smith, G., Faculty and Student Perception of Institutional Functioning: A Measure of the University Environment, Georgia State University, Report No. 74-4, Office of Institutional Planning, February, 1974.

Presented results of a survey of faculty and students about the University and compared the findings with a national survey. It was based upon a perceptual approach to the institutional environment.

Smith, G. (Ed.), Georgia State University Fact Book, 1975-76, Office of Institutional Planning, October, 1975.

Provided concise overview of the institution, including students, faculty, administration, staff, library, finances, degrees, physical resources, etc. Focused on ten-year growth period from 1966 through 1975.

Smith, G. (Ed.), Georgia State University Fact Book, 1976-77, Office of Institutional Planning, October, 1976.

Provided brief but pertinent information on a variety of subjects. The publication served the purpose of an official reference source which provided rapid access to specific facts and data about the University.

Williams, J.E. and Bryson, C.H., A Survey of the University Community Concerning Child Care Needs, Georgia State University, Report No. 74-10, Office of Institutional Planning, June, 1974.

Obtained views toward an expanded child care operations in light of possible Federal support.

Students:

Bryson, C.H., The Employment of Graduate Assistants at Georgia State University, Report No. 74-9, Office of Institutional Planning, April, 1974.

Analyzed graduate student employment by areas; displayed characteristics of students by sex, race, marital status, alien status, age, and years employed; and provided data on financial assistance to graduate students.

Bryson, C.H. and Cannon, R.E., Registration Survey Results, Winter Quarter, 1976, Georgia State University, Report No. 76-11, Office of Institutional Planning, March, 1976.

Summarized a survey of students conducted to obtain input on the registration process. Variables considered included school, student level and employment status.

Prather, J.E. and Smith, G., Factors Influencing Student Performance on a Language Skills Examination: The Regents' Test, Georgia State University, Report No. 76-1, Office of Institutional Planning, July, 1975.

Study conducted to determine what factors influence students scores on the Regents' Test. Based upon a weighted sample of students taking this examination in Fall, 1975 and Winter, 1975 (N=1910).

Strickland, W.G., Demographic Student Study for Planning, Georgia State University, Report No. 76-4, Office of Institutional Planning, September, 1975.

Presented demographic data on students emphasizing a graphic/tabular format. In conjunction with general characteristics, study contained maps showing student residential patterns by student age and level.

Williams, J.E., Survey of Entering Freshmen: Fall Quarter, 1975, Georgia State University, Report No. 76-7, Office of Institutional Planning, December, 1975.

Provided opinions of freshman students about college, Georgia State University, and the admissions process.